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## SEEBOHM'S TRIBAL SYSTEM IN WALES.<sup>1</sup>

THAT the appearance in 1883 of Mr. Frederic Seebohm's *English Village Community* opened a new period in the study of mediæval social and economic history, no longer needs saying. That book did two things : it gave us a knowledge, such as we had not possessed before, of the daily life of the mass of the English people ; and it created a presumption that the explanation then currently accepted of the genesis of those conditions was altogether inadequate. But it has to be confessed that it did not quite succeed in making clear to its readers the directions in which its author himself looked for a solution of the problem. It was understood that Mr. Seebohm abandoned the theory which traced back the manor to a free village community ; it was frequently supposed that he substituted a purely "Roman" origin.<sup>2</sup> This impression was a natural result of the emphasis Mr. Seebohm laid, and very properly laid, on the late-Roman *villa* and on its resemblance to the mediæval manor : it was confirmed by the natural association in many minds of Mr. Seebohm's name with that of M. Fustel de Coulanges. But a more careful reading will show that Mr. Seebohm was even then not disposed to find in the Roman *villa* the last word in the discussion. He will be found arguing that "the tribal system" of early Germany itself showed a tendency toward a manorial organization.<sup>3</sup> The later "manor" may thus, as he frequently remarks,<sup>4</sup> have had "a complex origin"—in German tribal conditions on the one side, as well as in Roman methods of estate management on the other. So far, however, as the argument in the *English Village Community* goes, the "tribal" element is looked for mainly in the German migration : and, as a result of an examination of early Celtic evidence, Mr. Seebohm goes so far as to say that "the pre-Roman tribal system in Britain was evidently not the parent" of the later manor.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, being part of an Inquiry into the Structure and Methods of Tribal Society. By FREDERIC SEEBOHM, LL.D., F.S.A. London and New York, Longmans, Green & Co., 1895. — 238 pp., and Appendix, 111 pp.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Vinogradoff, Villainage in England, p. 33; Digby, History of the Law of Real Property, Preface to fourth edition.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, p. 345.

<sup>4</sup> *E.g.*, pp. xiv, 346, 414, and "compound product," p. 422.

<sup>5</sup> P. 252 ; *cf.* p. 345, "The Welsh system was not directly approaching the manorial arrangement, except perhaps on the mensal land of the chiefs," and side

Subsequent reflection has only strengthened Mr. Seebohm in his conviction that, by the side of Roman institutions, we have to make room, not indeed for a village communalism, — the stage of the discussion is past in which that could any longer be thought possible, — but for the tribal system as an almost universal factor in the formation of mediæval institutions.<sup>1</sup> His investigations for some time past have been devoted to the problem of the constitution of tribal society ; and the results of these investigations, so far as they have gone at present, are now before us in *The Tribal System in Wales*. That Mr. Seebohm should begin with Wales is hardly perhaps what we should have anticipated, considering the conclusions of the earlier volume. The existence of a mass of "remarkably full and detailed Welsh documentary evidence" would hardly have furnished a sufficient motive, did not Mr. Seebohm now believe, whatever he may have thought twelve years ago, that "a substantial knowledge of the facts of one tribal system," even though it be a Celtic one, will serve as "a key with which to unlock the riddles of others."<sup>2</sup> He does not here express the further opinion, which we have some reason to believe he has come more distinctly to entertain, that the evidence now warrants our tracing the social evolution which culminated in the manor, behind even the Roman occupation, back into the purely Celtic period.

It must be said at the outset that *The Tribal System in Wales*, while not so startling and far-reaching in the scope of its argument as *The English Village Community* — and that was impossible from the nature of the case, — is a book which distinctly furthers the discussion, and makes at least one contribution to it of fundamental importance. As compared with the treatment of Celtic material by previous writers, like Sullivan, Maine and Skene, there is an evident gain in concreteness and consistency — a gain due, as it would seem, to the "economic" interest which compels the investigator to picture to himself the realities behind nomenclature. And the one permanent contribution is the account of the Welsh *wale*. The earlier book of Mr. Seebohm and the later have thus rendered like services to historical science : whether or no it has helped us with the "origins," each has made a great positive addition to our working knowledge of conditions well within the documentary period. Before 1883 nobody really knew, in any living sense, what the *virgate*

analysis. Nevertheless, even in this book, the Romans are spoken of in another place as "strengthening the manorial element on British estates," p. 411.

<sup>1</sup> *The Tribal System in Wales*, Preface, p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> P. viii.

was; now it has become a commonplace starting-point of discussion. And so the Welsh *welc* was all the time in the Welsh printed material; it was even in the Welsh chapter of the earlier book: but it had not obtained for itself a prominent and secure place in our thoughts until it was put in the forefront of the argument in *The Tribal System in Wales*.

Accordingly it must not be thought any detraction from the merits of the book to say that the whole argument of Mr. Seebohm calls for thoroughgoing criticism, and demands more documentary support, if it is to be accepted, than Mr. Seebohm has so far furnished. Mr. Seebohm himself does not claim finality; he "prints this part of the essay separately" with the express object of securing a consideration of the Welsh evidence "on its own merits"; and I am confident he will himself prefer that the piety of disciples take for the present a controversial form. Therefore, in the present article there will be given first a synopsis of the argument of each chapter, slightly rearranged occasionally, and then such critical observations as it may seem to call for. These latter will be hardly intelligible without the book, and may be skipped by the general reader.

Chapter I sets forth "the land system in Anglesey as described in the Extents" of 1294, 1339, 1351 and 1352, soon after the conquest of North Wales (1282), and when, as we find from these same documents, the pre-conquest conditions, so far as the mass of the people was concerned, were practically unchanged. Anglesey was then and is still, it must be remembered, a district, for Wales, "exceptionally agricultural." There were in that island four "manors," in the language of the Extents; and one of these is examined in detail. The "manor" of Aberffraw, which had been the seat of the princes of North Wales, consisted of two portions, a larger and a smaller, separated by a mile or so of ecclesiastical territory. The larger portion was made up, in the first place, of what the later Extents call the "demesne," including five carucates of (arable) land, three mills, two meadows and the fishery; and the demesne itself embraced a *Maerdref* ("the prince's home farm . . . cultivated by *villani* of *Aberffraw*") occupying four carucates, of *Trefcastell* ("the farm homestead of the *Maerdref*") with one carucate attached to it, and of *Garthey* (some fourteen little gardens of cottiers). In the same larger portion were also the holdings of the "free tenants," who appear as four sets of *heredes*, each set called a *welc* (literally "a bed"). The smaller portion of the manor, on the contrary, was exclusively occupied by "villeins," arranged in three

groups or "hamlets." All the villeins were subject to money rents, to heavy payments in kind, and to the performance of a large number of day-works ; while but little was due from the free tenants except money rents. Moreover, the tenure of the villeins, both on the *Maerdref* and on the outlying hamlets, was "of the nature of *trefgevery*," i.e., it involved some sort of *group responsibility* for dues. The use of this term serves to identify their position with that of the prince's *aillts* (to be spoken of later) as described in the Welsh Codes ; though in the case of the *aillts* the feature of their position on which most stress is laid is the "regulation" by which *equal division* of the land was brought about within the group, with no recognition of individual claims to inheritance. Outside the manor proper there were, in the surrounding territorial division called a *cantref*, a number of *villae*, occupied some by free tenants and some by *villani* and some by both, paying rents in money and in kind to the prince. But of these we are told little, and our attention is concentrated on the manor itself.

The point most obscure in this account is the nature of the *Maerdref* and the relation to it of the "villeins of Aberffraw." Was it like the "demesne" of an English manor? That is what is suggested by "the prince's home farm,"<sup>1</sup> and similar phrases. Or was it like the *villenagium* of an English manor, and was there no separate "demesne" in the narrower sense? This is what is implied by the argument that "the land of the *Maerdref* was of the nature of *regulated*" or servile land.<sup>2</sup> Must there not rather have been something like the manorial demesne *and* something like manorial land-in-villenage? The latter, because we are told in the records of "tenements" from which were due considerable payments in kind ; the former, because these tenants were also liable to some 900 "day-works," which must have been on land other than their tenements. A somewhat similar but less serious difficulty is presented by the position of the villeins of the smaller portion of the "manor": there also it would seem that there must have been some distinction between the tenements and the land on which the day-works were to be expended. These are, indeed, questions as to which Mr. Seebohm may reply that his readers, with the evidence set before them in the Appendix, may as fittingly hazard a conjecture as himself ; and they are mentioned only to show that it is hardly so easy to picture the Aberffraw of the thirteenth century as Mr. Seebohm's pages might suggest. There are, however, a number of smaller

<sup>1</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> P. 18.

points in the exposition more open to criticism. Such is the account of the relation of the "manor" to the *cantref* and its subdivision the *cymwds*. On page 1 there is a manor "in each cantref," while on page 4 there is one in each of two *cymwds*; cf. the vagueness,—"cantref or cymwd,"—of pages 26, 90, 136, 149. We may question the appropriateness of the use of the term "Norman" for English officials of 1294 and half a century later (pp. 3, 5, 8, 51, 125, 135, 235, 237 *et al.*). As to the free tenants, it has to be remarked that at Aberffraw they seem, as Mr. Seebohm points out, to have all been attached to the service of the prince's household; and it is only by anticipating the argument of later chapters, and not from any clear indication in the evidence presented in this, that they can be called "successors of the Welsh free tribesmen,"<sup>1</sup> and their money payments a commutation for "the old food rents of the free tenants."<sup>2</sup>

In the second chapter, the most important in the book, Mr. Seebohm turns to the free tenants, and seeks to make their position clear by the aid of an Extent of the Castle and Honour of Denbigh of the year 1335. From this Extent it is evident that the land of that district was then held in *lecta* or *weles*, terms designating both the holders and the holdings. That these *weles* were groups of kindred descended from an ancestor whose name the *wel* bore, is clear from the lists of persons there given with the prefix *ap* to their names, from the use of *progenies* as an equivalent for *wel*, and from the frequent description of the tenants as *coheredes et participes*, or *coheredes et parccnarii*. The geographical areas called *villatae* were occupied by these *weles* in such a way that sometimes a *villata* was divided among several *weles*, sometimes a *wel* had shares of more than one *villata*, and sometimes a *wel* occupied the whole of a *villata* or even more. From each *villata* 20s., the "tunc pound," were due to the lord; and the obligation was divided among the *weles* in proportion to their share of the *villata*. The *wel* itself was composed of four degrees of kindred; and the holdings—if not of the *weles*, as Mr. Seebohm thinks, at any rate of the primary fractions of them, which had been allotted to each son of the original ancestor and which were known as *gavells*<sup>3</sup>—remained undivided, although individual rights of user were carefully defined. The physical features of the Denbigh district favored a pastoral life and put difficulties in the way of an extension of tillage, being in these respects more characteristic of Wales as a whole than those of Anglesey.

<sup>1</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, p. 13.<sup>2</sup> P. 9.<sup>3</sup> P. 35.

This fact, when combined with what we have learned of the *welc*, suggests that the free population was composed of

communities of graziers of cattle, with rights of grazing . . . in different parts of the district; each community, with, it may be, its score or two of kinsmen, forming a complex unit, one in its relations to the other kindreds, but nevertheless with intricate internal hereditary and family divisions and rights.

There is evidence for *welcs*, presumably of the same character, in other parts of North Wales and also in South Wales.

All this is admirably set forth; and that some such kindred holding was then general among fully free Welshmen can no longer be doubted. Mr. Seebohm, indeed, gives the impression that such methods were characteristic *only* of the fully free, unconsciously perhaps anticipating a subsequent argument. For *priodarii*, as the tenants are sometimes called in the Extent, does not, as Mr. Seebohm himself points out later, necessarily mean "free tribesmen," though to them it was most commonly applied;<sup>1</sup> and in 1335 there seem to have been as many *welcs* "in tenura nativorum" as "in tenura liberorum."<sup>2</sup>

In the third chapter Mr. Seebohm begins to utilize the less trustworthy material presented by the Welsh Codes and Triads. He makes no attempt to determine their dates and varying values, but points out fairly enough that "if the Codes contain a body of customary law, which in natural course would produce the condition of things described by the surveys" already looked at, "their authenticity will be substantially confirmed." "If," also, "the legal traditions of more doubtful date and origin," the Triads, "supply reasons, in tribal sentiment or in more or less archaic details of custom, for the legal rules of the Codes, they themselves become evidence which cannot be wholly ignored." He then seeks to show that there existed in ancient Wales a sharp "distinction between tribesmen and non-tribesmen, primarily one of blood," and therefore well-nigh insuperable; and that this was the real significance of the later Anglicized and manorialized classification of "free" and "bond," *liberi* and *villani* or *nativi*. The tie of kindred among the tribesmen was exceedingly strong; and Mr. Seebohm traces several circles of kin-association. First of all, there was "the kindred to the ninth degree of descent," with its chief and other officers. A sentence, not free from obscurity, in one of the Codes lends some

<sup>1</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, p. 31; but *cf.* pp. 122, 123; and Appendix, p. 93, where care is taken to add "*liberi*" to "*priodarii*."

<sup>2</sup> See, *e.g.*, Appendix, p. 72.

color to the assertion that this chief of kin was afterwards replaced by a "lord"; and we may go on to suppose that the practice described elsewhere in the Codes, according to which a son at the age of fourteen was brought to a lord to become his man and receive from him support, had taken the place of an earlier usage in which the young tribesman became dependent on the chief of kin—a chain of argument whose links are hardly strong enough to carry much weight. The Triads, it is next pointed out, speak of the *cyvarwys*, or rights acquired by every native Cymro on attaining the age of fourteen, as "five free *erws* (acres), co-tillage of the waste, and hunting"; and it is remarked that such statements "do not seem, on the whole, inconsistent with the facts just learned from the Codes." Indeed, Mr. Seebohm seems to regard the acquisition of *cyvarwys* as identical with the grant of maintenance by the lord (or chief of kin)<sup>1</sup>—a bold surmise, for at first sight the two things seem to have nothing in common but the age of the recipient, and, indeed, to belong to different environments, the one to a growing chivalry, the other to pastoral life.

The Codes not only reveal the larger kindred group, composed of relatives to the ninth degree of descent: according to Mr. Seebohm they present rules as to inheritance of land which serve to explain the lesser kindred to four degrees already disclosed to us in the *welcs* of the Extents. It is laid down in the Venedotian Code of North Wales that brothers are to share land; that when all the brothers are dead, their children, being cousins, are, if they please, again to share equally; and again their children, being second cousins: and the same rule occurs in different terms in the Dimetian Code of South Wales. The final division and settlement of claims could not take place till all the grandsons had died; and therefore, until then, the original holding of the ancestor would "remain the external unit."<sup>2</sup> Hence the constitution of the *welc*.

This is a thrilling piece of construction; but there are a good many perplexities attached to it. In the first place, it is not clear that the distinction of the Codes between those of Cymric blood ("innate" Cymry) and those of alien blood is made more intelligible by being described as one between "tribesmen and non-tribesmen." Was there only one "tribe" among the Cymry? Then, again, though we may readily believe that the later distinction between *liberi* and *nativi* went back to a distinction between Cymry and non-Cymry, it might be well to strengthen this contention by the

<sup>1</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> P. 75.



citation of unmistakable evidence, considering that Mr. Skene, with the same material before him, had no hesitation in regarding the *aillts* of the Codes (who confessedly answer, in part, to the later *villani*) as "native members of the tribe."<sup>1</sup> The conclusion based on the rules of the Codes as to re-partition of land-rights from generation to generation, until second cousins get their turn, is not greatly strengthened by the citation<sup>2</sup> from the Denbigh Extent to the effect that inheritance was allowed no further than the fourth degree; for this Denbigh record does not hint at renewed partitions, and deals only with the case of succession to a man who has no nearer kin than a nephew or cousin.<sup>3</sup> The latter part of the chapter is rendered uselessly bewildering, I cannot help thinking, by the introduction of a fresh gradation of kinship groups to the fourth and ninth degrees (not to mention another to seven degrees) for the payment of *saraad* and *galanas*<sup>4</sup> (like the Teutonic *wergelds*). As Mr. Seebohm points out later,<sup>5</sup> these are not coincident with the lesser and greater kindreds before considered, inasmuch as they are based, not like the latter on agnatic, but on cognatic relationship.<sup>6</sup>

The further we go, the more conjectural the argument becomes. Chapter IV deals with the relationship of the kindred groups to the occupation of land. Little is said, however, of the greater group, and practically the author confines his attention to the lesser group to four degrees, identified by him with the *wela*. His conclusion is that the head of such a kinship was the "landed person," the *uchelwr* or *breyr* (translated commonly "noble") of the Codes; that "in him were vested the rights of the *wela*"; that he represented it towards the outside world; and that the other members of the *wela* were not regarded as joint tenants, but, on the contrary, had nothing but rights of main-

<sup>1</sup> Celtic Scotland, III, 200, 205.

<sup>2</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, pp. 45, 73.

<sup>3</sup> On p. 45 Mr. Seebohm gives three brief paragraphs in English as a "passage from the Extent," referring in a footnote to Appendix B, i. This is probably a misprint, for there is no Appendix B, i. In B, h. (Appendix, p. 96) however, there is an extract from an Extent, of which the paragraphs on p. 45 are possibly meant as an abstract in English. But besides slight inaccuracies as to the amounts of the reliefs, the English makes the note refer to the sons and relatives of "a free priodaur," while the Latin says nothing of "free," and does say "si quis eorum seu quorumcumque aliorum *Nativorum*." The English also omits to translate the phrases *si filius non habuit, tunc frater ejus aut nepos aut consanguineus qui ejus heres propinquior fuerit*.  
<sup>4</sup> P. 76. <sup>5</sup> P. 101.

<sup>6</sup> Professor Maitland has some excellent observations on the urgent necessity of clearing up this matter of the historic relation of agnation to cognation, in the *Economic Journal*, V, 592.

tenance. It must be confessed that this is a dangerously expeditious way of getting a landed aristocracy out of a patriarchal régime. That there is no direct evidence for it, Mr. Seebohm would doubtless allow. And there are at least three objections to it. The Extents do not indicate that there was usually some one distinct head to the *welle*, after the death of the ancestor from whom it was named: Mr. Seebohm himself speaks of the sons and grandsons succeeding in the proprietorship of occupation rights. Nor is there any indication that these Denbigh *welles* had grown or were growing into territorial lordships. And lastly, the lord or chief of kindred who is referred to<sup>1</sup> as providing maintenance for the young tribesman is, according to the argument of the previous chapter, not the head of the kindred to four degrees (which does not clearly appear in the Codes as an organized group), but the head of the kindred to nine degrees. Perhaps Mr. Seebohm thinks that, on "the passage from nomad life to settled occupation,"<sup>2</sup> the responsibility passed over from the head of the larger to the (supposed) head of the smaller group. If so, this is a position that needs to be stated and argued.

Assuming, however, this relation of the ordinary tribesman to the head of the smaller kindred as proved, Mr. Seebohm sets about explaining the long list of chattels which is given in one of the Codes in a connection which implies that they were private property. The ordinary tribesman is to be looked upon, he maintains, as

a little dairy farmer with separate homestead, chiefly engaged in making butter and cheese; but with a car and yoke of oxen for carrying and ploughing, with corn crops growing on his five free *erws*, as well as corn in the bin. And thus his maintenance was not provided by his sharing in a common meal, or receiving doles in money or in kind from the common purse or produce of the kindred, but the result of his own labor and use of the cattle and *cyvarwys* which was received as his tribesman's right on his coming of age.<sup>3</sup>

This, however probable it may seem, stands or falls with the construction on which it is based.

So much then for the "free tribesmen," for whom, as no such words as "tribe" or "tribesmen" seem to appear in the Codes, it would probably be better to substitute some such term as "the free Cymry." In Chapter V we turn to the non-Cymry, the "strangers in blood," and their position according to the Codes. As a rule, says Mr. Seebohm, they appear, whether described as *taeogs*, *aillts* or *alltuds*, as

<sup>1</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> P. 87.

<sup>3</sup> P. 99.

"located either on the *maerdref* of a prince or in separate *taeog-trefs*," apart from the free Cymry—an account with which the situation at Aberffraw at the time of the English conquest is delightfully consistent. Now "the peculiar feature of the *taeog-tref* as described in the Codes was the entire absence of any rights of inheritance, all the *taeogs* sharing equally in the land";<sup>1</sup> and as we have seen, the use of *tir cyfrif* to denote such a tenure connects these passages of the Codes with the Anglesey *trefgevery*, involving joint responsibility. Mr. Seebohm regards this peculiar kind of tenure as "the natural result of carrying out the tribal principle that there was no true kinship and inheritance among strangers in blood," *i.e.*, non-Cymry; and so he arrives at a clear-cut distinction, henceforth regarded by him as fundamental, between *tir cyfrif*, the "register" land of aliens on the one side, and *tir gwelyawc*, the land held in *wele* tenure by Cymry on the other. But though "regulated" *taeog-trefs* were the rule for non-Cymry, Mr. Seebohm allows that strangers "in better circumstances" were permitted to settle on the waste of a chieftain or *uchelwr*, and so in course of time to create non-Cymric *weles*, bound to the soil but also irremovable after the fourth generation. This enables him to explain the *weles* of *nativi* in the Denbigh Extent; but at the same time it comes very near surrendering his theory that the Cymry obstinately refused to recognize anything like kinship on the part of aliens. Nor can it be said that it is an altogether satisfactory explanation of the origin of the intermingled free and villein *weles* of Denbigh. Unfortunately the extracts from the Denbigh Extent printed in the Appendix appear to omit some of the passages concerning the "native" or villein *weles*. But even from those here given it is clear that the *weles* "of natives" sometimes paid *tunc*;<sup>2</sup> and yet *tunc* was a commutation of the *gwestva*, or payment in kind to the prince, which was peculiarly characteristic, so Mr. Seebohm argues in the next chapter, of the "free tribesman."<sup>3</sup>

Chapter VI deals with chieftainship. The designations used for the Welsh princelings suggest, argues Mr. Seebohm, that their authority was in most cases based on ideas of kinship—not a very conclusive argument. The scanty evidence as to the conquest of the western part of North Wales from the Gaels by the Cymry under

<sup>1</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Appendix, p. 77. According to the quotation from the Venedotian Code, on p. 15, it was usually the duty of "the men of the maertrev" to "pay the tunc of their land."

<sup>3</sup> P. 154; and see the index, *s. v.* *gwestva*.

"Cunedda and his sons," and of the western part of South Wales by his descendant Maelgyn, in the fifth and sixth centuries respectively, is next interpreted as showing that "tribal chieftainship" itself was "that of a family" — a sort of princely *wel*.<sup>1</sup> The evidence is not convincing; and it is strange that Mr. Seebohm does not lay more stress on that conquest itself, as furnishing a likely explanation of the existence, especially in those parts of North Wales, of a subject non-Cymric population. More satisfactory is the account, following the Codes, of the chieftain's food-rents from free tribesmen, commuted later for money, as well as the explanation, suggested by a comparison of the Codes with the Extents, of the later *villata* as "the geographical unit from which the *tunc* pound was due." The more burdensome food dues from non-Cymry are also set forth, but not in so clear a light.

This is the end of the main argument. Hitherto we have dealt with no material of assured antiquity earlier than the thirteenth century, though the Codes appear to present many "archaic" features. In Chapter VII Mr. Seebohm seeks to show the probability that the picture he has drawn is true for a much earlier period. The Book of Chad, belonging originally to Llandaff, contains in a handwriting of the ninth century a number of records of donations of land to the church; and two of these transfer a *tref* with a *census* resembling very closely in character the winter and summer payments from *taeog-trefs* set forth in the Codes. Growing still bolder in his flight, Mr. Seebohm finally rests upon some entries in a 12th century Life of St. Cadoc, which go back in substance, he believes, to the end of the *sixth* century! They do not claim to be contemporary records; but his conclusion (from an elaborate argument as to the recurrence of the same names as in Gildas, and as to their similarity to 7th century Continental documents) is that they may be relied on for a substantially true statement of what actually took place. Now these mention the grant of "*cibaria per tres noctes*," resembling the *gwestva* from free tribesmen, and also the payment from *villae* granted to the church of *pensiones* resembling in character the *taeog* food-rents. The implication is that where the food-rents existed, the rest of the system, of which in the time of the Codes they formed part, existed also.

Looking back now over the course of Mr. Seebohm's exposition, the reader may perhaps agree with the estimate with which this article began, *viz.*, that in forcing upon our attention the Welsh *wel*

<sup>1</sup> The Tribal System in Wales, pp. 143, 144.

of the 13th century consists the chief value of his treatise. The theory which he puts forward of the origin of the *welsh* needs further support: his theory of the relation of the *welsh* to "tribal" organization, and that of the creation of social classes, cannot be regarded as at present much more than brilliant hypotheses. It is necessary, even if ungracious, to say this, because in the present chaos of ideas as to social origins, there is some danger lest what may be called "tribalism" may seize the command, *vice* the mark theory retired, before it has proved its authority. And as yet we hardly know what we mean when we speak of a "tribe." Mr. Seebohm rather assumes the notion than explains it.

Nevertheless we owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Seebohm for the determination with which he has compelled what before was a bewildering jungle of Celtic nomenclature to yield up to us some sort of intelligible shape. We have now something to discuss that we can at least try to make a mental picture of: and that is a great gain. But Mr. Seebohm's work has a way of growing upon one on repeated reading; and it is not unlikely that further consideration may reveal a cogency in his argument not now as apparent as one would like. If so, my excuse must be that *The Tribal System in Wales* is not an easy book to read.

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